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Should Bicyclists Pay for Their Own Facilities? They Already Do!

Below you will find rebuttals to the claim that bicyclists don't pay their fair share for road facilities.

1. Nor do motorists.

See "[true costs of driving](#)" facts and figures.

\$200 billion was spent in 2006 on [transportation at all levels of government](#); only just over half of that generated by fuel and vehicle taxes and tolls. The remaining amount comes from property taxes, general fund allocations, bond issues, and fare boxes of transit systems.

The Federal share of all transportation spending is approximately 20% ([18% for transit](#), [22% for highways](#)). So the 18.4 cents per gallon in Federal gas tax is a small percentage of overall spending on highways.

2. Actually, bicyclists do contribute.

There are [57 million adult bicyclists](#); the overwhelming majority are motorists also.

Bicycling generates [\\$133 billion](#) in economic activity annually; twice the impact of fishing. A significant portion of that is driving to and from events, rides, and other cycling activities.

3. Streets and highways are part of the public realm, not the private domain of motorists.

There are approximately [100 million Americans](#) who don't drive – they are too old, too young, have a disability, choose not to drive, or have been prohibited from driving – and almost [10 million households](#) have no access to a motor vehicle.

4. Bicyclists are very low impact. .

Bicyclists don't take up a lot of space (either moving or parked), don't cause a lot of wear and tear on the highway, don't generate a lot of pollution, rarely hurt others in a collision, and are efficient and economical in almost every regard. The cost of accommodating bicyclists is minimal compared to those same costs for motor vehicles.

Above copied from <http://www.bikeleague.org/action/trashtalk/payyourway.php>

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“Motor vehicle user fees only finance about half of roadway costs and a much smaller portion of parking facility costs; the rest is financed indirectly through general taxes (for local roads), higher retail prices (for business parking), lower wages (for employee parking), and higher housing costs (for residential parking) (Litman 2009; Subsidy Scope 2009). This funding structure forces people who drive less than average to subsidize their neighbors who drive more than average. Automobile travel also imposes other external costs, including congestion delays, accident risk, pollution emissions, and various economic and environmental costs from fuel consumption. North American fuel taxes are among the lowest among developed countries and have not been raised to account for inflation during the last two decades. These low user fees exacerbate traffic and parking congestions.”

- from <http://www.vtpi.org/carwars.pdf>

In other words, cyclists *already* pay for public roads. They just rarely get any accommodations on them!

Better bike facilities mean less traffic and less competition for parking. Compared to road projects that are strictly for automobiles, bike/ped projects are *substantially* less expensive, they require little or no maintenance (no long term cost) and have demonstrable economic, health, and environmental benefits to the areas where they are installed. The return on investment for quality, well-designed & implemented bike facilities is always higher than the return for more automobile travel lanes.

Since the 1940's, our country has disproportionately subsidized private automobile travel over other modes of transportation, *forcing* Americans to use automobiles for even short-distance errands. Developing safe, convenient, and well-designed bicycle facilities, as well as pedestrian and public transit options, *increases* our freedom of mobility.

As one participant at the 2011 National Bike Summit put it, “You don’t tax the solution.”

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